

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Camp Senia Historic District

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Custer National Forest n/a not for publication
city, town Red Lodge y vicinity
state Montana code 030 county Carbon County code 009 zip code 59047

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☒ public-Federal

Category of Property

- ☐ building(s)
☒ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>18</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u>2</u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>20</u>	<u> </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
n/a

Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.
☐ removed from the National Register.
☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

* Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic:

camp

secondary structures

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic:

camp

secondary structures

7. DescriptionArchitectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Other:

Western Rustic style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls stone

log

roof asphalt

other stone chimneys and fireplaces

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Camp Senia Historic District is composed of 18 historic, Rustic style log and stone buildings, 1 log structure, and one historic corral, all of which contribute to the significance of the district. Located approximately 12 miles west of Red Lodge on the West Fork of Rock Creek, the site for this fishing camp and dude ranch was chosen by Al and Senia Croonquist because this was as far into the wilderness that the two believed they could haul the equipment necessary for construction. Today, nearly 70 years later, the U.S. Forest Service road has reached only one mile beyond the complex, and the wilderness designation for the Beartooth Mountains assures that the road will go no further.

Set in the deep and narrow canyon on the West Fork of Rock Creek, Camp Senia is surrounded on the north, west, and south by the Beartooth Wilderness Area. To the south across the creek rises the steep walls of Silver Run, one of Montana's highest mountain peaks at an elevation of 12,500 feet. The long fingers of Silver Run's avalanche chutes are snow covered through most of the summer season, while the snow on top lasts year round. A horse and hiking trail leaves Camp Senia and winds its way up the face of Silver Run and then south to Timberline Lake and a glacier. Senia Creek drains the Red Lodge Creek plateau at the north end of the complex. Another trail leads off from Camp Senia to the north, taking the traveler to East Rosebud Lake over a 10,000-foot pass. About one mile to the west starts the Wilderness Trail along the West Fork to Sundance Pass at 11,000 feet and the glacial fields of the Beartooth plateau.

Camp Senia is situated on lightly sloping ground draining to the south toward the West Fork. The approximately six acres encompassed within the boundaries of this nomination support mature stands of lodgepole pine and some younger pines that have grown up in the last 20 years. The dense forest canopy separates the cabins visually and heightens the "wilderness" feeling conveyed by the scene. Small stone-lined paths lead from one cabin to another. Paths and roads to the cabins are buried beneath years of pine needle duff. The gravel-surfaced, single lane West Fork road passes to the north of the complex and ends at the Wilderness Area boundary. This road remains snowbound throughout the winter months.

All buildings and structures within the Camp Senia complex contribute to the significance of the district. After Camp Senia ceased to operate as a dude ranch in the early 1930's, the cabins were used by separate families. Individual kitchens were added to many of the cabins, mostly during the 1940's. These additions were completed by Walter Wood, who also served as caretaker for the Camp Senia Association at the time. Wood employed the same locally gathered

☐ See continuation sheet

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building materials and construction methods used in the construction of the original 1920's portions of the cabins. Most of these highly compatible addition were built onto the back of the cabins and do not significantly detract from the historic architectural character of the overall district. A description of each building within the Camp Senia Historic District follows. The building numbers are keyed to the site map.

- #1. Lobby. Constructed 1919. The main lodge, called the "Lobby" was the first building to be erected at Camp Senia and is the only building where the walls are fashioned completely of saddle-notched lodgepole pine, rather than the typical stone/log combination. The lobby consists of the original 25' x 35' log cabin with its engaged, corner porch, a 40' x 44' log addition built in 1921, and another 19' x 19' room to the rear also built during the early 1920's. Composed of three rooms in a T-shape, the Lobby was used as the central social area of the camp, housing the camp store or "wannigan," where Indian goods were sold, and a reading room. Each room features its own fireplace of river cobble. River cobble was also used for the foundation and the walkway and retaining wall leading to the dining room nearby. The gable roof is supported by five, exposed purlins and is covered with green rolled asphalt roofing. The inset porch of the original portion of the building faces the creek and Silver Run, seen through pairs of 8-lite casement windows. The 1921 addition to the south has a shed roofed porch facing the creek. The windows of this section are 16-lite. A third entrance to the building provides access to the camp store at the rear.
- #2. Main Kitchen and Dining Cabin. Constructed in 1927 to replace an earlier dining cabin that burned ca. 1926. This 31' x 28', rectangular, log building has an engaged porch at the west end under an 8-foot extension of the gabled roof. The lower portion of the exterior walls are constructed of uncoursed native stone, while the upper half is lodgepole pine set with double-saddle notch corner timbering. A native rock apron surrounds the porch and is fashioned into battered corner supports for the vertical log columns holding up the roof overhang. The center of the top surface of the rock wall of the porch features a cut-away within which a hollowed-log planter is placed. The porch deck is of poured concrete. The building has an interior, native rock chimney that pierces the roof near the center of the building. The windows are 9-lite fixed units, 8-lite casement units flanking central 12-lite fixed units, and 6-lite casements set singly, in pairs, and in threes. A five-panel, wooden doors provide access on the east and west elevations.
- #3. Second Croonquist Residence. Constructed ca. 1927. This cabin is one of the most outstanding of all Camp Senia buildings. It is oriented toward the West Fork of Rock Creek and Silver Run Mountain, in close proximity to the Main Lodge and Dining Room, and a short distance from the other guest cabins. The Croonquist cabin is of lodgepole pine with uncoursed native

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stone used for the lower half of the exterior walls. The corner detailing of the stone walls is of particular interest in that the stone protrudes at right angles beneath butt ends of the logs, extending the angle of the battered log ends to the ground. The axis of the gable roof runs east-west, with two gable roofed protrusions extending from the south elevation, one covering a 7' x 11' porch with stone sidewalls. Each wooden door has 12-lites. The east elevation is graced by a large stone, exterior chimney with small square lights to either side. Windows consist of a narrow set of 1-over-1, double-hung windows flanking the doorway, and 6-lite and 9-lite casement units. Decorative trim is of bent and burled logs, that give a special Rustic style appearance to the porch and side gable. The front porch is furnished with a handsome, hand-made, log settee. This building retains complete historic architectural integrity.

- #4. First Croonquist Residence (later Cook's Cabin). Constructed ca. 1919 as the second building to be completed in the complex. The cabin measures 16' x 17', with a log supported gable overhang over the doorway on the south elevation. The lower portion of the walls are of uncoursed native stone, while the upper portion is lodgepole pine cribbing. The stone apron rises to the eave line at the corners, and this distinctive battered stone decorative element obscures the corner-timbering treatment. The windows are 1-over-1, double-hung sash on the primary facade and multi-light casements on the secondary elevations. A shed-roofed addition was built to the rear of the building during the historic period (ca. 1922) and features horizontal logs spiked to vertical log corner supports.
- #5. Cooler. Constructed ca. 1920. A wilderness adaptation to keep meats, milk and other perishables fresh, the cooler is framed in small lodgepole pine, covered with a gable roof with rolled asphalt roofing and sheathed in river cobble and screen wire. The cooler is situated on an overflow channel of the West Fork and even during low water season the stream could be diverted through the approximately 10-foot-square structure. A pipe channeled the cold water inside the cooler to a poured concrete trough where the food was set in containers, then another pipe drained the water back into the overflow channel situated directly in front of the structure. Since the West Fork is fed by glacial melt, its temperature rarely exceeds 40 degrees, and served most effectively for refrigeration.
- #6. Women's Bunkhouse. Constructed ca. 1923. This cabin is basically rectangular in shape and measures 29' x 73'. The original portion of the building is 20' x 30' and is visible on the back (north) elevation and the center of the front (south) facade. The typical, uncoursed native stone base for lodgepole pine log cribbing was also used on this building. The west wing of the building was added in 1946 and features log walls set on a poured concrete base and includes a bathroom and an L-shaped screened porch, measuring 18' x 46'. Another log addition on the east end, built in

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1976, measures approximately 18' x 29' and has a new stone chimney. The roof of this addition is a few feet higher than the roofs of the original portion and the 1940's addition. Wood shingles cover the entire roof, except for the porch and bathroom section, which are covered with green, rolled asphalt roofing. The building features 9-lite casement windows. An interesting feature of the original portion of the cabin is its small stone cooler for the storage of perishables. Despite the alterations to the original cabin, this building still makes a positive contribution to the historic district. A small, log outbuilding with a gable roof is located at the back of the cabin.

- #7. Men's bunkhouse. Constructed ca. 1924. This rectangular-shaped cabin measures 20' x 46' overall. The original portion is 20' x 30' and a 1948 addition to the west end measures 12' x 16', and features an open porch measuring 8' x 16', which serves to complete the rectangle. The windows are 9-lite casement units set in threes. The rear of the 1948 addition has a 16-lite window. The typical combination of double-saddle notched log cribbing and stone was used for the original portion as well as the additions to the cabin. From the main axis of the roof, two gable projections extend on the south elevation. Both gable roofed extensions are supported by burled log supports.
- #8. Guest House. Constructed ca. 1927. The original portion of this cabin measures 24' x 17' and has a large stone fireplace on what was the west elevation. The lower portion of the exterior walls is of uncoursed native stone and the upper log walls are fashioned with vertical corner posts with spiked horizontal log infill. Windows are 9-lite casement units. In 1940, a 12' x 40' addition was built onto the west elevation with stone and log walls matching the original and 9-lite casement windows. In 1945, a rear addition and a covered porch were constructed on the north elevation. This addition features a base of concrete masonry units with log walls above. The rear addition is not as architecturally compatible with the original portion of the cabin as the 1940 addition. Because the 1946 addition is located at the rear of the building and is not highly visible, it does not detract significantly from the overall Rustic stylistic appearance of the cabin. A small, log outbuilding is located to the north of the cabin.
- #9. Bathhouse. Constructed in 1921. This rectangular, gable roofed log building has an open, gable roofed extension to the rear. The building has vertical corner supports to which horizontal logs are spiked. The lower half is of uncoursed native stone with battered stone corners. The windows are 12-lite casement units. The rear extension has open stone sidewalls under a log purlined, gable roof. This semi-open space served as a laundry while men's and women's restrooms with showers were located inside.

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- #10. Guest House. Constructed ca. 1925. The original portion of this log and stone building is the large living room with the corner stone fireplace and chimney at the south end. Burled logs were selected for porch roof bracing, and rest atop of the native stone base. Corner timbering is fashioned with four vertical log corner supports to which the horizontal logs of the side walls have been spiked. The windows are 9-lite units, some fixed and some casements. A two-room, addition was constructed on the north elevation in 1954, with walls that protrude five feet from the plane of the original walls, and a roof that is two feet higher. Uncoursed native stone was used on the lower portion of the walls of the addition, with lodgepole pine logs above. Likely the stonework of the original part of the cabin was repointed at this time as wide, smooth mortar joints are evident on both sections of the building, unlike the recessed mortar of the other cabins in the complex. Despite the addition and the rather clumsy repointing of the masonry work, this cabin retains its primary elements of historic architectural design and detailing and makes a positive contribution to the historic district.
- #11. Guest House. Constructed ca. 1925. This L-shaped cabin received a number of additions. The original portion of the cabin measures 18' x 18', with a native stone base and corner timbering fashioned with four vertical log corner supports to which the horizontal logs of the side walls have been spiked. During the 1940's, a 12' x 18' addition was constructed on the north elevation, creating a longer facade, which is oriented to the west. The construction methods and materials used for this addition match the original portion perfectly. In 1977, an L-extension was built onto the east elevation. The gable roof on that extension balances the small gable that extends over the front door, which faces west. The porch roof is supported by burled poles angled to rest on the upper row of the rock wall. Although the additions post-date the historic period, they are highly compatible and this guest house contributes in a positive manner to the overall character of the historic district.
- #12. Guest Cabin. Constructed ca. 1926. The lower portion of the walls is of uncoursed native stone, while the upper portion is lodgepole pine log cribbing. Corner timbering is fashioned with four vertical log corner supports to which the horizontal logs of the side walls have been spiked. A native stone chimney and fireplace are found in the original portion of the cabin. The building has received two additions, one in 1941 and another in 1946. Both additions exhibit the stone and log construction techniques used in the original portion and are compatible. Windows are single-lite and 9-lite casements set in pairs. The cabin is oriented toward the south.

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- #13. Guest House. Constructed 1922. This square, 17' x 17' hipped roof cabin with stove pipe piercing the roof is of the typical log and stone construction pattern of the district buildings. Corner timbering is fashioned with four vertical log corner supports to which the horizontal logs of the side walls have been spiked. The cabin has four windows, all 9-lite units. The main door is wooden and has a bent wood handle that adds rustic charm.
- #14. Guest House. Constructed ca. 1922. This square, 17' x 17' hipped roof cabin also has a stove pipe piercing the roof. Corner timbering is fashioned with four vertical log corner supports to which the horizontal logs of the side walls have been spiked. The lower half of the exterior walls are of native stone. The cabin has four windows, all 9-lite units. The main door is wooden with a bent wood handle.
- #15. Guest Cabin. Constructed ca. 1926. The lower portion of the walls of this small guest cabin are of uncoursed native stone, while the upper portion is lodgepole pine log cribbing. Corner timbering is fashioned with four vertical log corner supports to which the horizontal logs of the side walls have been spiked. The small gable overdoor is supported by pole bracketing. The windows are all 9-lite units. The building maintains complete historic architectural integrity.
- #16. Guest Cabin. Constructed ca. 1925. This small cabin measures 16' x 13' and is oriented toward the south. The lower portion of the walls are of uncoursed native stone, while the upper portion is lodgepole pine log cribbing. Corner timbering is fashioned with four vertical log corner supports to which the horizontal logs of the side walls have been spiked. The cabin features a native stone chimney and fireplace. Windows are single-lite sliding sash set in pairs. This cabin retains complete architectural integrity.
- #17. Guest Cabin. Constructed ca. 1926. Measuring 15' x 14', this small cabin is constructed in the usual method, with the lower portion of the walls being of uncoursed native stone, while the upper portion is lodgepole pine log cribbing. Corner timbering is fashioned with four vertical log corner supports to which the horizontal logs of the side walls have been spiked. A native stone fireplace and chimney remain in place. The orientation is toward the west and the windows are single-lite casements set in pairs. Cabin retains complete architectural integrity.
- #18. Thrall Cabin. Constructed 1927. As the second largest building erected as a residence in the camp, and the fact that a great attention was paid to detail, this is one of the more interesting cabins in the complex. The main portion of the cabin is a 33-foot-square, with a 12' x 8' extension on the west elevation, which is original. The lower portion of the walls are of

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uncoursed native stone, while the upper portion is lodgepole pine log cribbing with extended butt ends and double-saddle notch corner timbering. The cabin is oriented to the south, overlooking the West Fork of Rock Creek, and has a covered porch measuring 9' x 23' with a low, stone retaining wall. Windows are multi-lite casements, including 9-lite and 12-lite sash. The cabin retains a very high degree of historic architectural integrity.

#19. Tack Room. Constructed ca. 1920. This cabin was used to house a blacksmith shop and the gear used for the horse-packing trips made from Camp Senia into the Beartooth Mountains. Constructed with the typical lodgepole and stone wall treatment and square-notched corner timbering, the cabin measures 29' x 16'. The entrance is located on the south elevation. In recent years, the interior of the tack room was renovated for use as a residence. The exterior of the cabin retains a very high degree of historic architectural integrity.

#20. Corral. Constructed 1919. Located behind and attached to the east wall of the tack room is the pole corral, four rungs high. A few rungs of the corral have collapsed, but otherwise the corral remains completely intact. A log water trough is still in place in the corral. The corral measures approximately 48' x 52'.

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Boundary Description

The West Fork of Rock Creek forms the southern boundary, which runs approximately 180'; then, the boundary runs directly north approximately 190' to corner 3 of lot 9; then, along the western edge of lots 9 and 1 for approximately 173' to corner 1 of lot 1; then, 130' east to corner 1 of lot 2; then, 150' north-northeast to corner 2 of lot 2; then, 55' south-southeast corner 1 of lot 3; then, 125' north-northeast to corner 2 of lot 3; then, 250 feet north-northeast to a point north of the corral; then, approximately 840' south to corner 2 of lot 6; then, 135' along the east edge of lot 6 to corner 3 of lot 6; then, approximately 130' south to the West Fork of Rock Creek and the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

Camp Senia is located on unsurveyed land in the Custer National Forest in Carbon County, Montana. Individual building lots have been surveyed by the Forest Service and these lot lines form the basis for the definition of the Camp Senia Historic District boundaries. As a large number of recreational homes have been built in the West Fork of Rock Creek drainage over the years, some in close proximity to Camp Senia, the boundaries for this historic district are drawn around the complex of buildings and take in a very limited amount of the surrounding land. Because the forest growth is mature and dense, the integrity of setting for the district remains high, with few of the historically unassociated houses located adjacent to the district being invisible from within the district.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☒ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

1917-1930

n/a

Entertainment/Recreation

Social History

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person

Croonquist, Alfred

Architect/Builder

Croonquist, Alfred

Tuttle, I.M. and others

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Camp Senia Historic District meets criteria A, B, and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In 1917, when construction began, Camp Senia was the first property to be developed in the Beartooth Mountains for the expressed purpose of operating a dude ranch and fishing camp for tourists. Over the next decade, Alfred Croonquist with a group of local workmen completed a complex of nineteen Western Rustic style log and stone buildings to accommodate summer guests. These cabins are particularly fine examples of the use of Rustic stylistic detailing in the construction of recreational buildings and exhibit a high level of craftsmanship and sophistication in the use of native materials. In addition to being the first, Camp Senia is also the only intact survivor of the four early dude ranches in the Beartooth Mountains and, thus, gains additional significance in the region as the best illustration of an historic dude ranch operation, the patterns of complex development and use, and the importance of the direct relationship of the ranch with the surrounding wilderness area. Alfred Croonquist and his wife Senia were pioneers in the development of tourist facilities in Carbon County and played a significant role in the promotion of tourism in Montana and the West during the 1920's and 1930's.

Camp History

The son of a Swedish storekeeper in the coal mining town of Red Lodge, Montana, Alfred Croonquist was guiding people through the Beartooth Mountains on fishing trips and into Yellowstone National Park by the time he was 19 years old. After he and Senia Pollari were married, they determined to build a fishing camp on the West Fork of Rock Creek, and began the construction of Camp Senia in 1917. However, work was postponed for the duration of the First World War when Alfred was called upon to run the family store, the Croonquist Mercantile in Red Lodge, while his brother Dick was away in the service. Al and Senia returned to camp construction in 1919 and announced the completion of the main lodge, which was called the "Lobby," later that year.

A series of tent platforms and new log cabins were added each year for the next decade as time and money permitted, during which time Camp Senia was operated as

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Borne, Lawrence R., Dude Ranching: A Complete History, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, NM, 1983.
- Bernstein, Joel H., Families That Take in Friends: An Informal History of Dude Ranching, Stoneydale Publishing Co., Stevensville, MT, 1982.
- "Camp Senia," a typescript of talk given by Senia Croonquist Hart to the Yellowstone Corral of Westerners on September 8, 1984. Copy available at the Montana State Historic Preservation Office.
- Henderson, Harley and Lawrence W. Small, Montana Passage: A Homesteader's Heritage, Falcon Press, Helena, MT, 1983.
- Marcuson, Pat, The Beartooth Fishing Guide, Falcon Press, Helena, MT, 1985.
- Schneider, Bill, The Hiker's Guide to Montana, Falcon Press, Helena, MT, 1983.
- Small, Lawrence R., Journey with the Law, The Life of Judge William J. Jameson, Rocky Mountain College, Billings, MT, 1984.
- Zupan, Shirley and Harry J. Owens, Red Lodge: Saga of a Western Area, Frontier Press, Billings, MT, 1979.

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical DataAcreage of property 6 acres

UTM References

A 1 2 6 1 9 7 5 0 5 0 0 2 8 5 0

Zone Easting Northing

C

B

Zone Easting Northing

D

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

see continuation sheet

☒ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

see continuation sheet

☒ See continuation sheet**11. Form Prepared By**name/title Edrie Vinsonorganization Carbon County Historic Preservation Officedate October, 1987street & number Courthouse Annextelephone 406-446-3157city or town Red Lodgestate Montanazip code 59068

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a dude ranch during the summer months. A number of Croonquist's Finnish friends from Red Lodge assisted in the construction of the cabins, including Frank Kuehn, head of construction, Celest Roat, Jalmer Pentilla, Jalmer Salo, Windy Salo, Ray Coster and his brother Ben, Walter Lantz, and M.I. Tuttle. Tuttle was actually from Fromberg and worked on the crews building a number of log cabins in Yellowstone National Park and Estes Park in Colorado. All construction materials, including concrete, windows, doors, flooring and shingles had to be hauled up to the camp from Red Lodge, approximately 12 miles away.

Senia Croonquist was in charge of the day-to-day operation of the camp, with the help of her younger sisters, Anna and Olga Pollari. The "cabin girls," mostly Finnish friends of the Pollari's from Red Lodge, also waited tables. Young boys were hired to keep the huge wood-burning cooking range stoked and fires laid in the cabins so that the dudes had only to light a match upon their return from mountain excursions. The camp accommodated approximately 40 guests altogether, at a charge of \$45.00/week during the early 1920's. There was a horse for every guest and generally four wranglers on staff throughout the summer who not only took dudes out on pack trips but were responsible for hauling in all the hay the horses needed.

Senia Croonquist was also the chief camp cook during the early years when the stove was set in a large canvas tent, prior to the construction of the log kitchen and dining hall in 1921. (The original kitchen/dining cabin was replaced in 1927 after a fire destroyed the first building, together with all tents and building supplies stored therein.) When the camp was crowded with visitors, the work was incessant, and at such times a hired cook was likely to "blow up" and walk off the job, as Senia Croonquist remembered. Problems with the cooks at Camp Senia was the subject of a locally produced comedy that was performed by the Red Lodge Community Vaudeville Company on opening night at the new Theatorium on June 24, 1924. Entitled "Wanted: A Cook," the play was written and directed by L.E. Hathaway, secretary of the Red Lodge Chamber of Commerce. The play was described as "a musical love story of Camp Senia," and the time was set during the late afternoon when supper should have been well underway. The cast of characters included "Croonquist, proprietor; Button, camp wrangler; Bobbie Van Bibber, runaway tourist; Mildred Millionbucks, another runaway; Mrs. De Puster Jones Smyth, a grass widow [a woman whose husband was away on business]; Mrs. Bridget O'Flanigan Washington, a cook lady;" and fourteen unnamed characters who acted as guests.

The summer of 1929 was a record-breaking year for the tourist hotels and dude ranches of the West. The stock market crash of October, however, had an immediate and devastating impact. All standing reservations at Camp Senia, where most guests returned year after year, were cancelled for the summer of 1930. In the wake of the Great Depression and at the end of a decade of concerted construction efforts at Camp Senia, the Croonquists experienced difficulty in repaying a series of their construction loans. By November of 1929, Croonquist

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had reorganized Camp Senia as the "Heart Tee Outfit" with new investors, but this corporation continued in operation for only one more year. Then, one of the regular summer dudes, Richard "Beanie" Thurber from Boston, took over the camp under the corporate name of the West Fork Holding Company. From 1933 through 1935, the Yellowstone Big Horn Research Association geologists rented Camp Senia for their summer field school, and for the following two years it remained vacant. In 1938, a new group of investors purchased the camp from Henry D. Thrall and the West Fork Holding Company for \$4,400. This corporate group, called the Camp Senia Corporation, has owned the buildings at the camp since that time and have used the cabins as private summer residences. The land remains in the ownership of the U.S. Forest Service and leased to the present owners of the camp buildings.

Architectural Significance

The distinctive, lodgepole pine and native stone construction of the Camp Senia cabins gains architectural significance as particularly well-crafted examples the Western Rustic style. The uncoursed native stone, which forms the foundations and the lower portions of the exterior walls, was also used to fashion battered bases for the log porch supports and the massive fireplaces and chimneys. An interesting detail of the stone work is found at the corners of many of the cabins where Croonquist laid the stone to project at right angles so as to resemble the projecting log ends of the walls above, which are cribbed lodgepole pine, with single-, double-saddle, or square corner notching, with sawn, battered log ends. A few of the cabins feature spiked vertical corner post timbering. Roofs in most cases are gabled, supported by five log purlins and covered with green, rolled asphalt roofing. The roofs of two small, square guest cabins are hipped. Large porches with decorative log support columns and burlled pole bracing are found on each larger cabin. A number of cabins received kitchen additions during the 1940's, which were completed by Walter Wood, who also served as caretaker for the Camp Senia Association at the time. Wood employed the same, locally gathered building materials and construction methods used for the original portions of the cabins during the 1920's, and the majority of the additions do not significantly detract from the historic architectural character of the overall district.

Although Alfred Croonquist's crew of carpenters and masons from Red Lodge who built the Camp Senia cabins were mostly Finns, the buildings do not embody the characteristics of traditional Finnish vernacular construction. The use of native stone for the lower half of the exterior walls and the fact that the logs were left rounded rather than hewn are features atypical of traditional log Finnish houses. Finnish craftsmen usually left logs rounded only on their barns and outbuildings. The saddle notch corner timbering used at Camp Senia, however, was commonly employed by Finns for residential log construction, although the battering of the sawn log ends is not typical of the vernacular mode. All of the buildings within the Camp Senia Historic District exhibit similar architectural characteristics, and form a cohesive grouping of Rustic style cabins surrounded by mature forest.

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In addition to the nineteen buildings at Camp Senia, Croonquist built at least another fourteen recreational cabins in the vicinity of the West Fork of Rock Creek for local families, mostly from the Billings area. None of these buildings have yet been inventoried, but there is a high likelihood that some may qualify for National Register listing. The Croonquist house in Red Lodge, of the similar log and stone construction, is the only one of its kind in the city and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Hi Bug Historic District on July 23, 1986.

Tourism Promotion

Alfred H. Croonquist played a significant role in the development of tourism in the West during the 1920's and 1930's. While operating Camp Senia, he annually visited the East with photographs and "moving pictures" to promote his dude ranch and secure reservations for the coming season. He also published numerous promotional pamphlets and newspapers to invite the eastern dudes to his wilderness paradise. Most of the guests at Camp Senia did come from the eastern states, and many returned every year, staying for entire summers.

In 1926, Croonquist helped organize the Dude Ranchers Association, which included dude ranch owners from Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho and Montana. He served as the organization's first vice president from 1926 until 1931, and then, after Camp Senia closed, as the Executive Secretary, with offices at the Northern Hotel and Northern Pacific Railroad offices in Billings. Croonquist initiated the publication of "The Dude Rancher," a trade magazine that continues today in the format he established. Croonquist has also been credited with significant contributions to the conservation movement, lobbying for the preservation of wilderness, fish, and wildlife, and personally stocking a number of lakes in the Beartooth Wilderness. He served for many years on the governing board of the Southeastern Montana Sportsmen's Association. In 1935, Croonquist was appointed the first traffic manager for Northwest Airlines for Montana, Wyoming and Idaho. Alfred Croonquist died in an airline crash in January, 1938.

On the local level, tourism became an important aspect of the economy of the Carbon County only after the major coal mines in Red Lodge closed in 1926 and 1932. The location of Red Lodge near the Beartooth Mountains and the city's designation as the departure point for the Beartooth Highway to Yellowstone National Park that opened in 1936, abetted the growth of the tourism industry, which remains vital to the area economy today. Alfred and Senia Croonquist were pioneers in the development of local tourist facilities, founding Camp Senia years before any of the other dude ranches in the county. Camp Sawtooth and Richel Lodge started in 1921, while brochures from Camp Beartooth on Beartooth Lake date as far back as 1928. All of these complexes have been lost to fire, demolition or relocation of the primary lodge buildings to new sites. As the oldest intact dude ranch in the region, Camp Senia gains special significance.

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Croonquist's ability to "sell" the scenery of the Beartooth region was renown. Brief excerpts from his promotional brochures of the 1920's follow:

The Beartooth Region is not exceeded by any other part of the West in historic, scenic or recreational attractiveness, and nature's endowment has made it altogether fitting for your summer outing. Thousands of square miles of towering peaks -- massive glaciers, mighty canyons, roaring waterfalls and crystal lakes -- a veritable ocean of mountains, thickly forested except on the highest slopes with redolent pines, and in summer carpeted with brilliant flowers. An enthusiastic western welcome awaits you in this hospitable region of sunshine, pure air, warm days and cool nights.

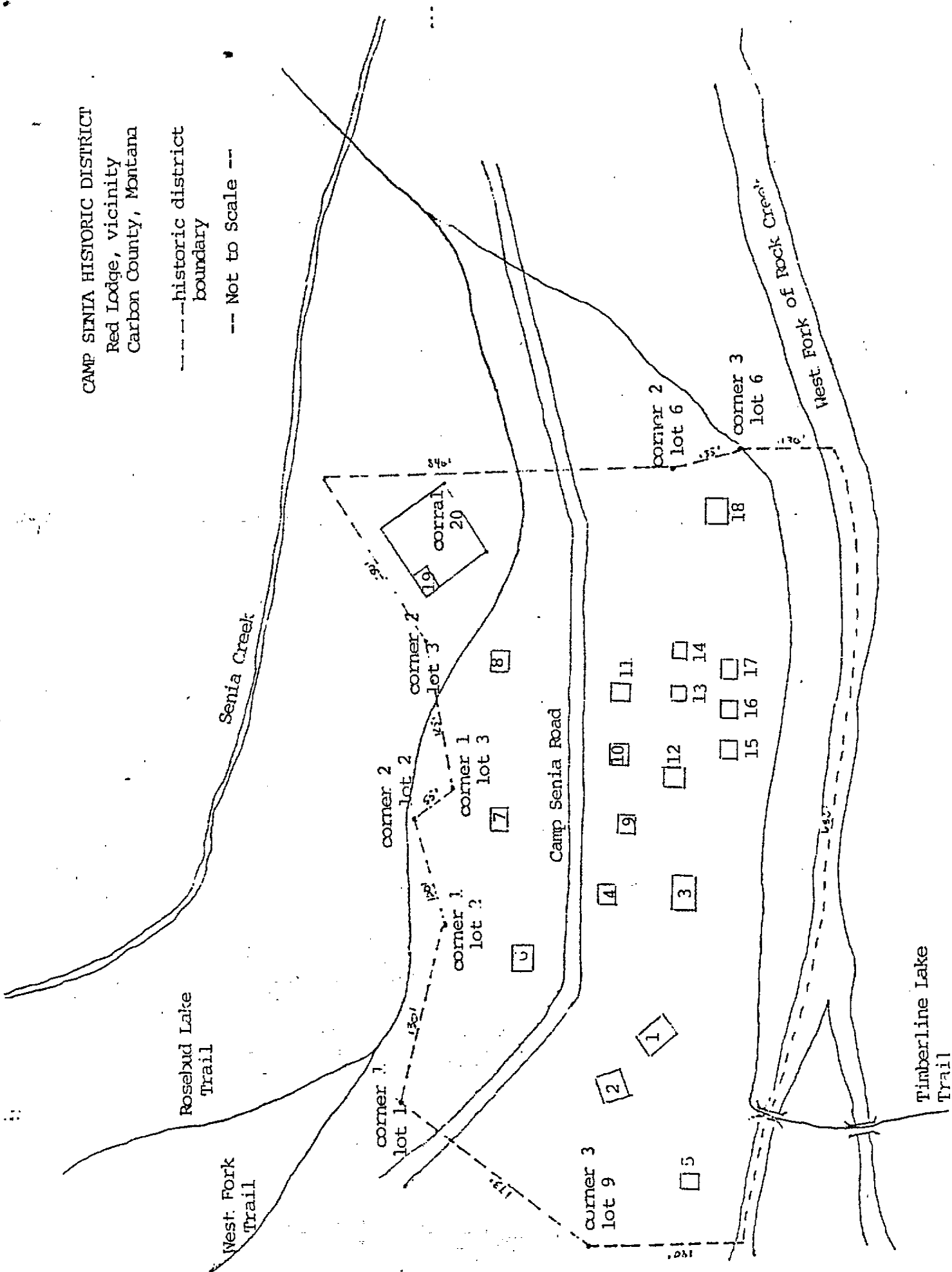
Camp Senia is in strict keeping with its environment --rough--rugged, friendly, scrupulously clean, wholesome, and of a nature that will pull you back again. Cabins, tents and accommodations in general are comfortable and just what an active mountain visitor would desire. There is no fuss of formalities up here. Folks who have been out before bring their western togs with them. If you have none, we suggest you buy them when you get here, and hang your city clothes on the hitching post until you leave. Horseback riding and fishing takes the time of most people, but you go places and do things every day.

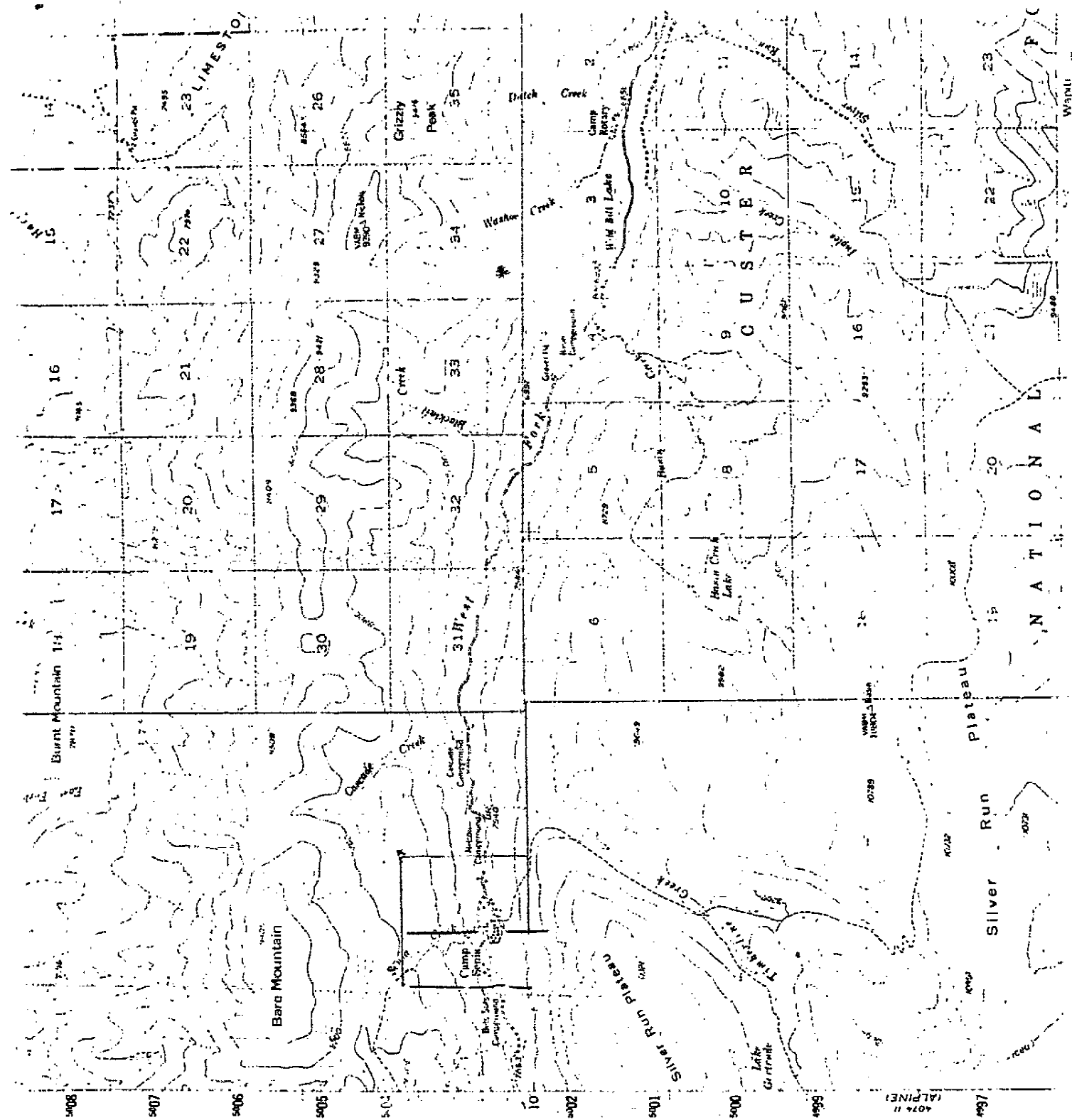
As for grub -- well, most of it is brought up from our own ranch daily. It's fresh milk and cream, eggs, garden truck and meat, and from town we get the fresh fruit that is on the market. This is well prepared and served; nothing fancy, just good food and lots of it.

Also, forgot to mention that there is no gasoline in Camp Senia. Nobody drives a car up side of your cabin and eats a picnic lunch on your front porch. The auto road ends down the creek a mile. You are in a region that has not been changed since God made it, except for our accommodations and miles of government constructed saddle trails.

---historic district
boundary

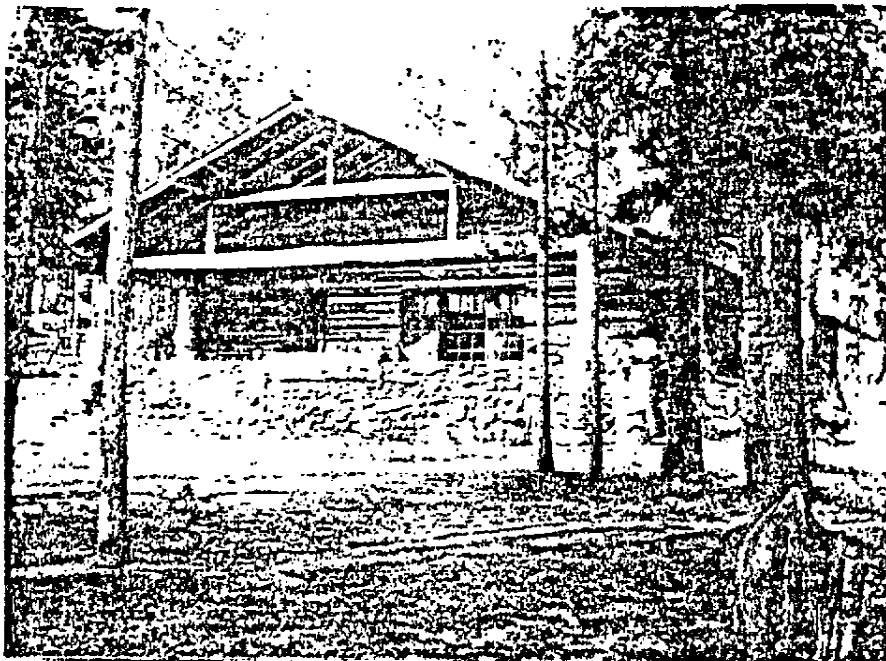
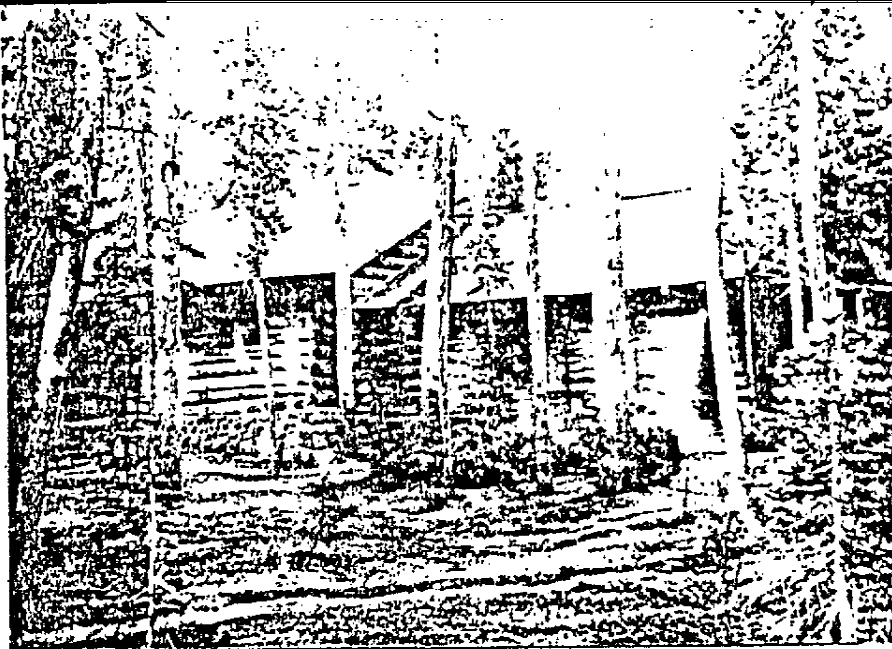
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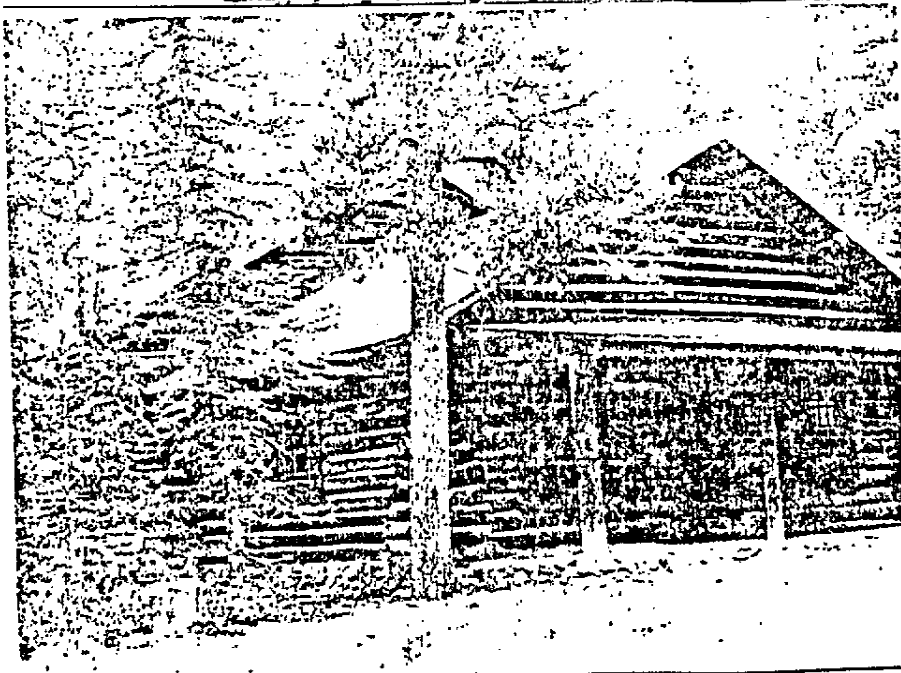
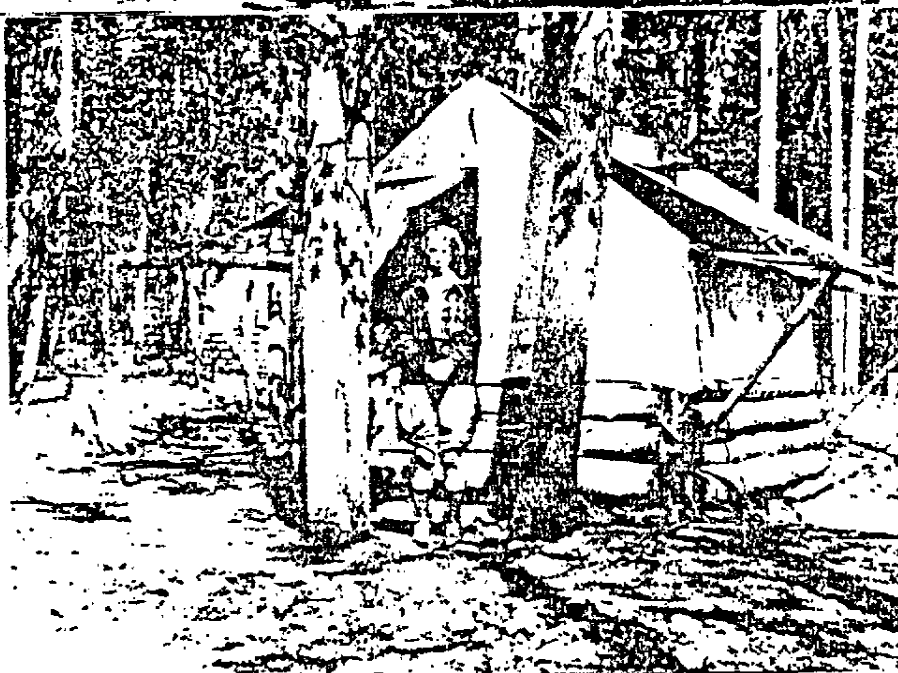
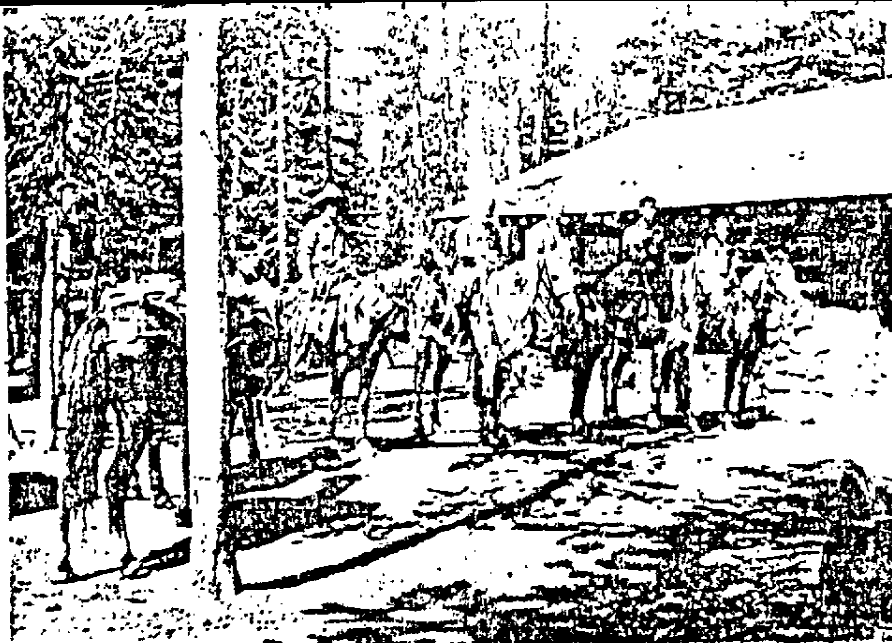


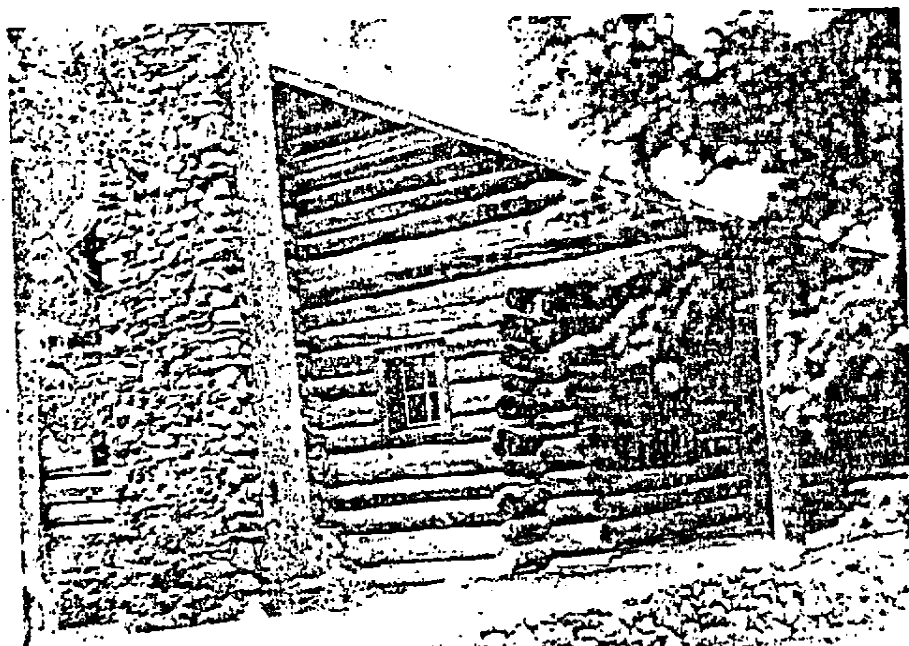
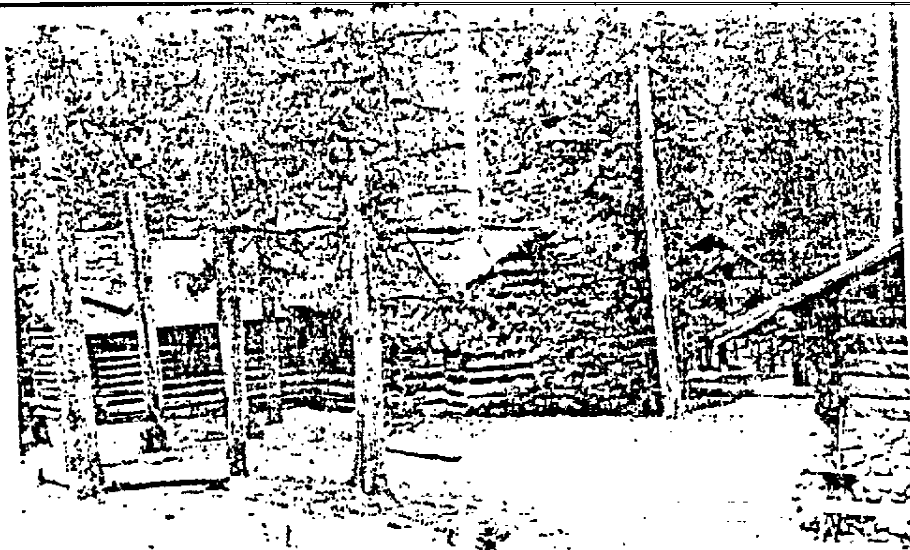


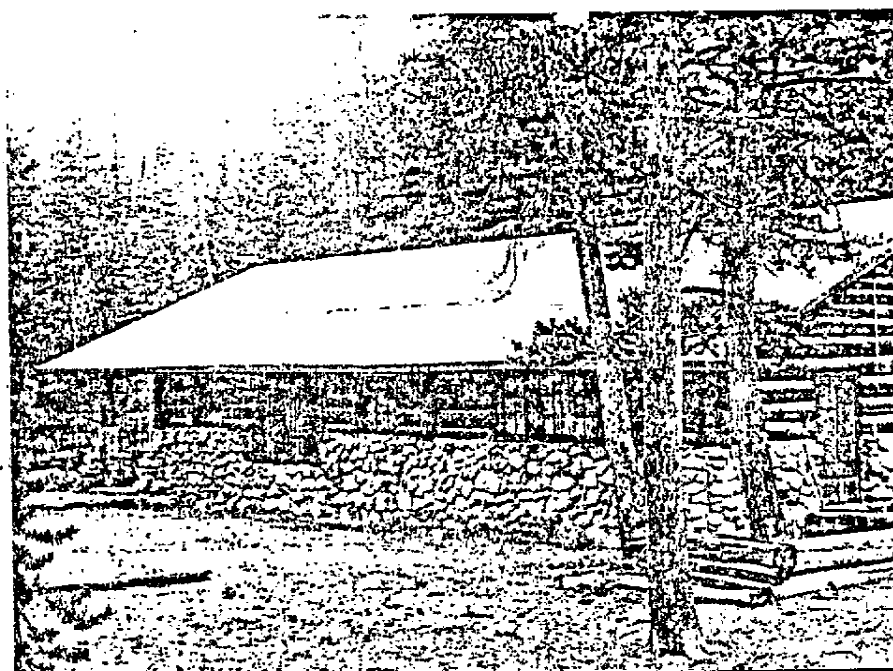
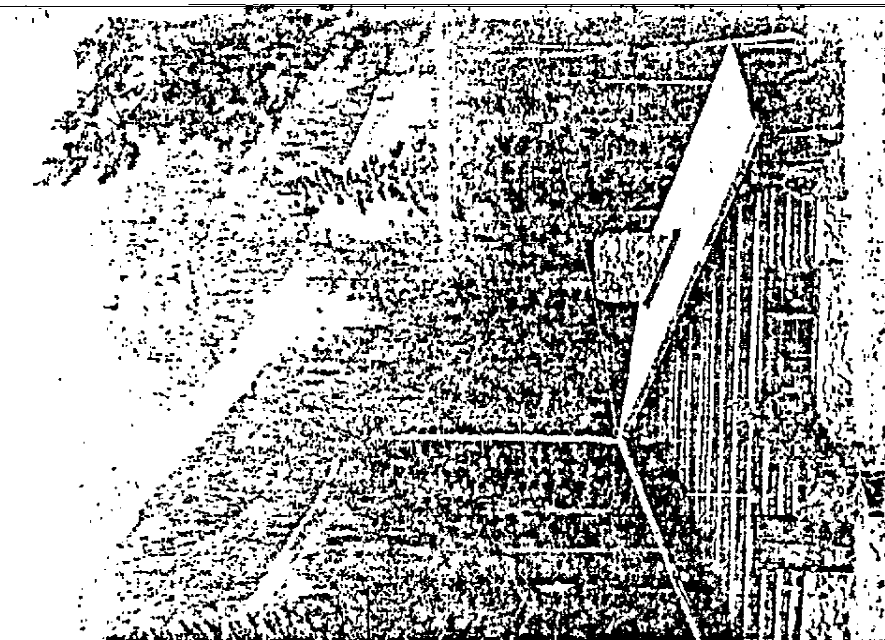
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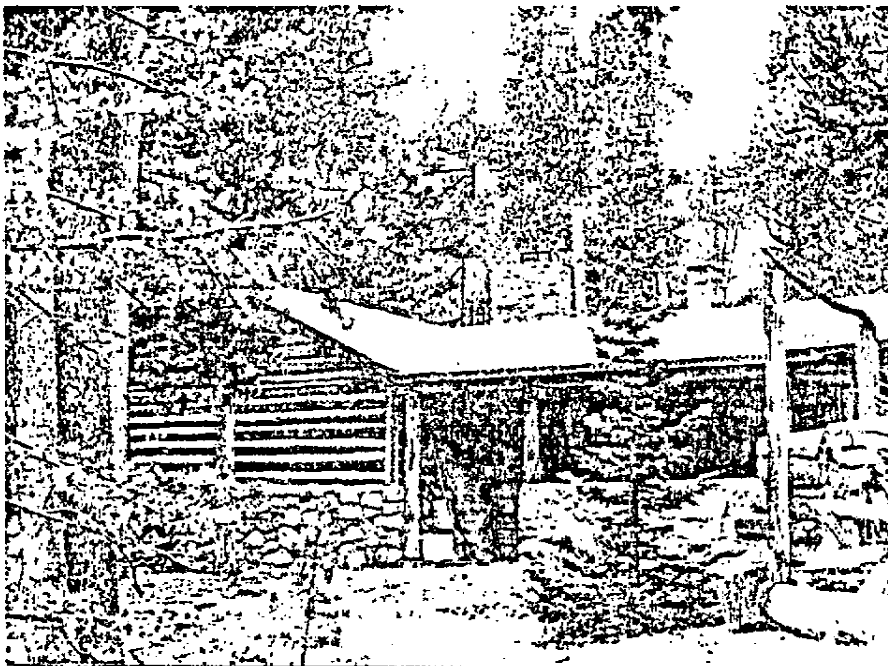
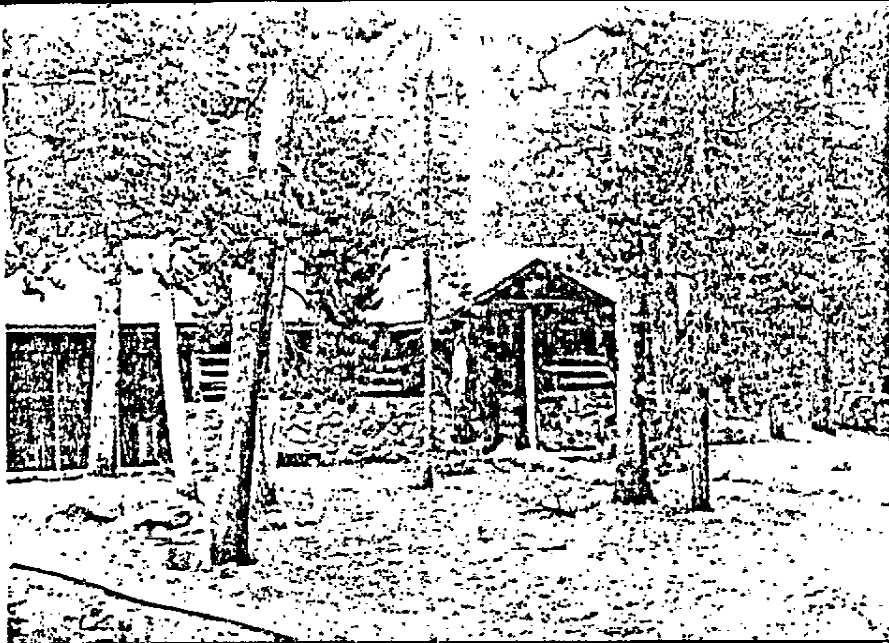


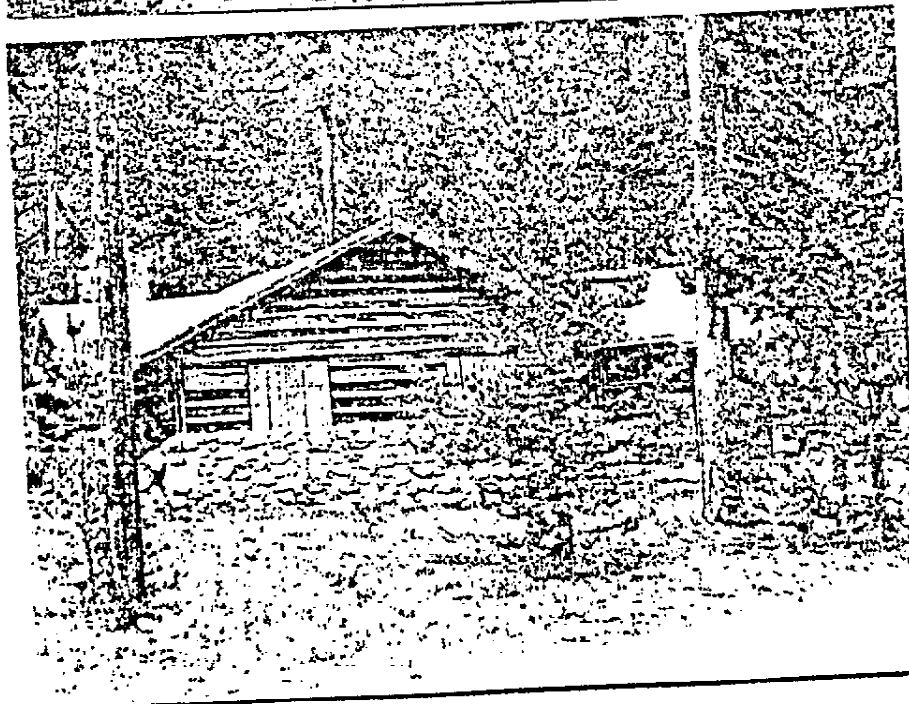
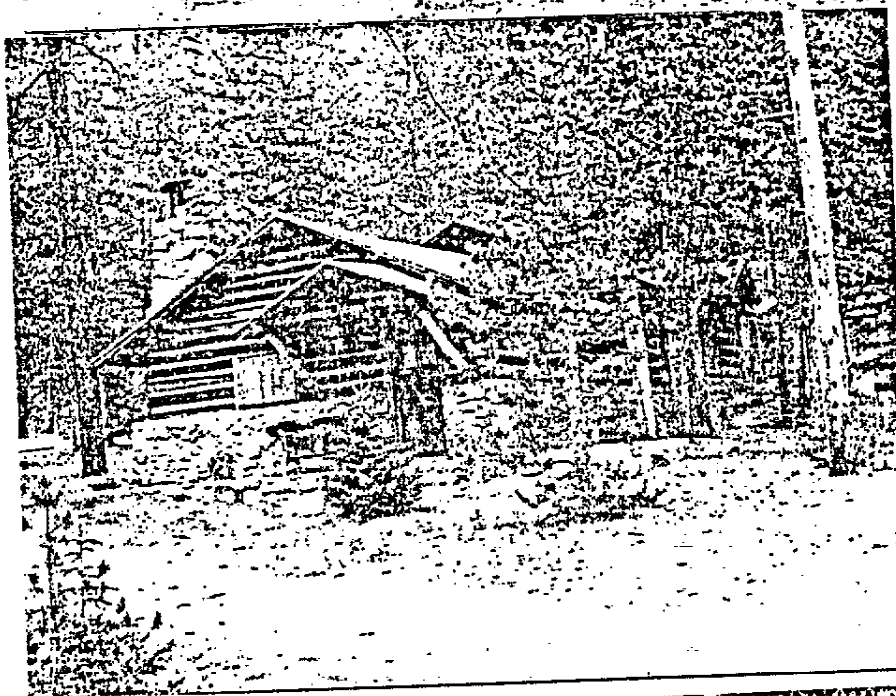


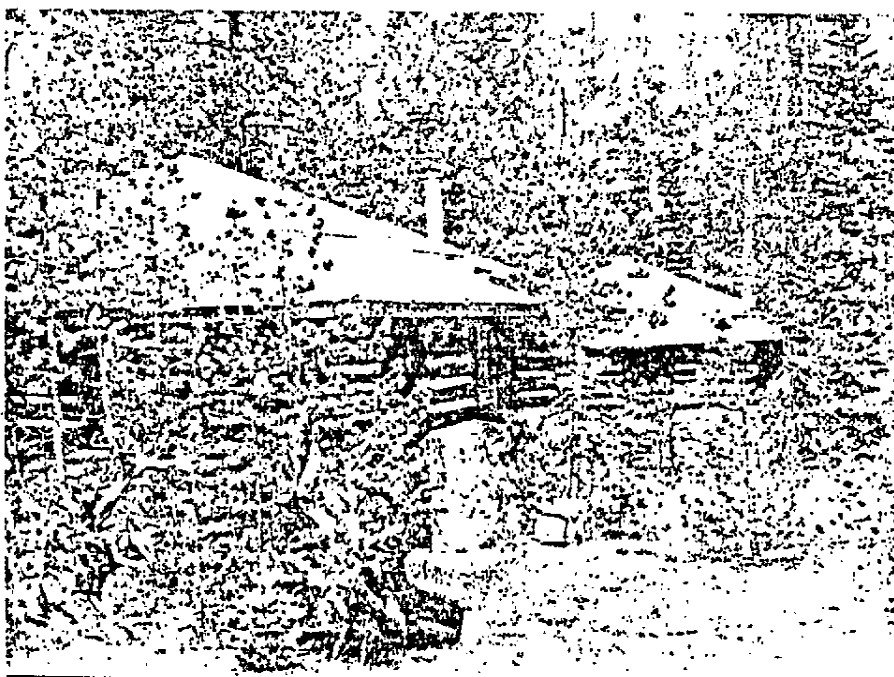
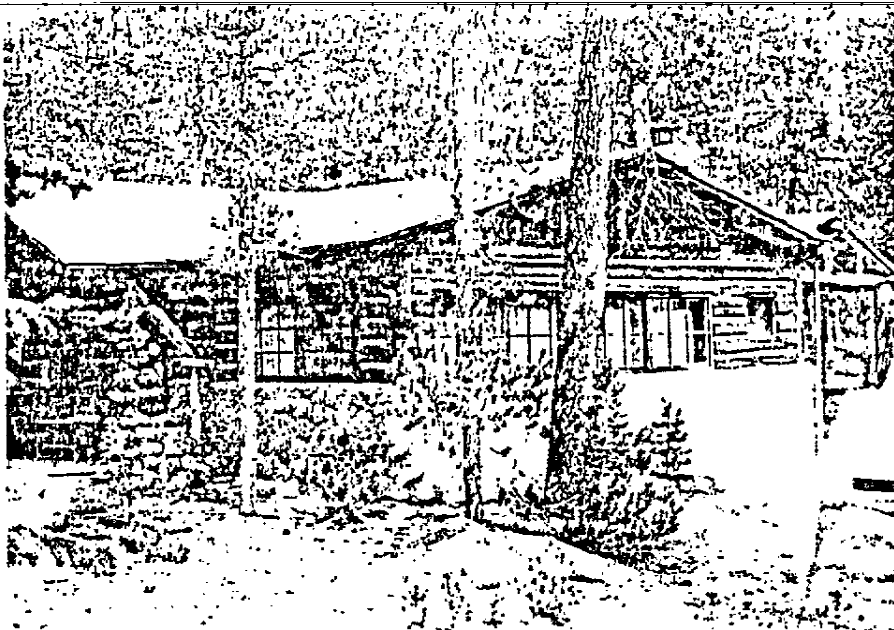


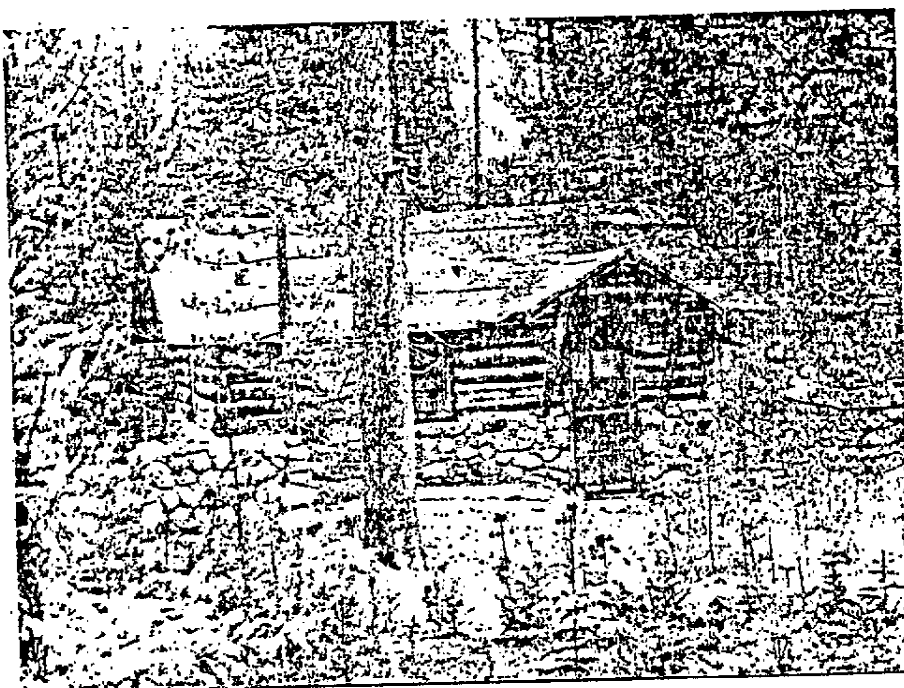
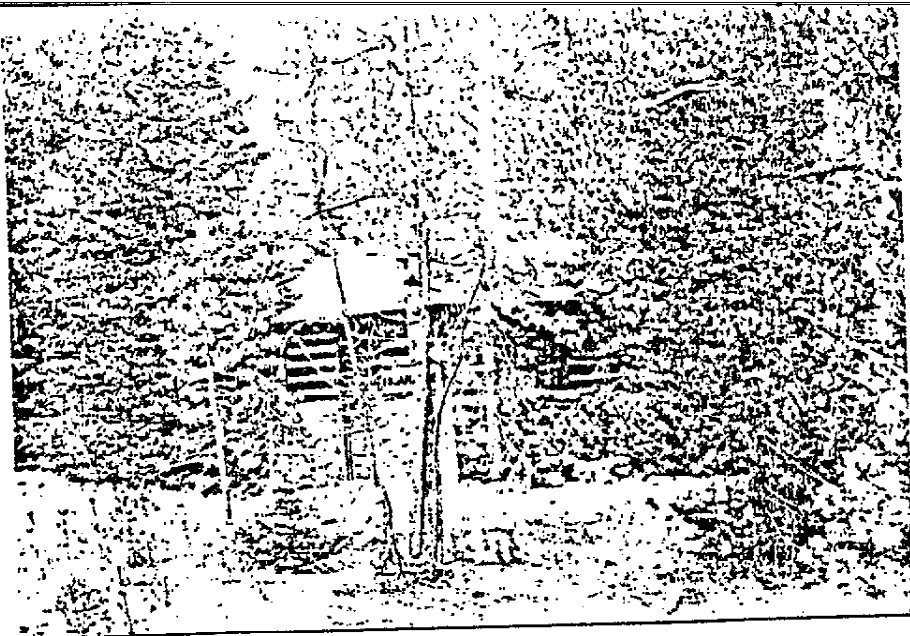


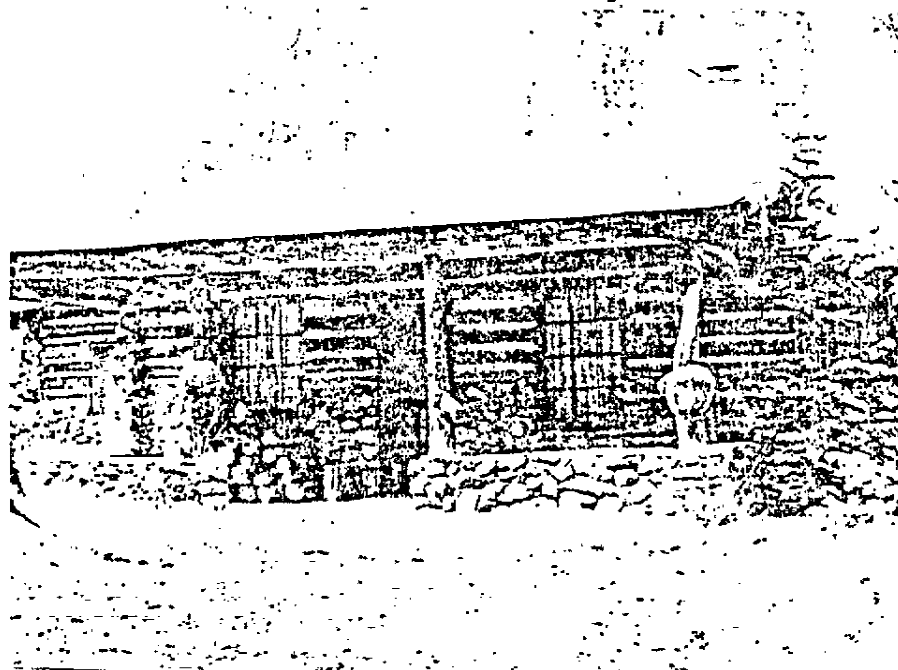
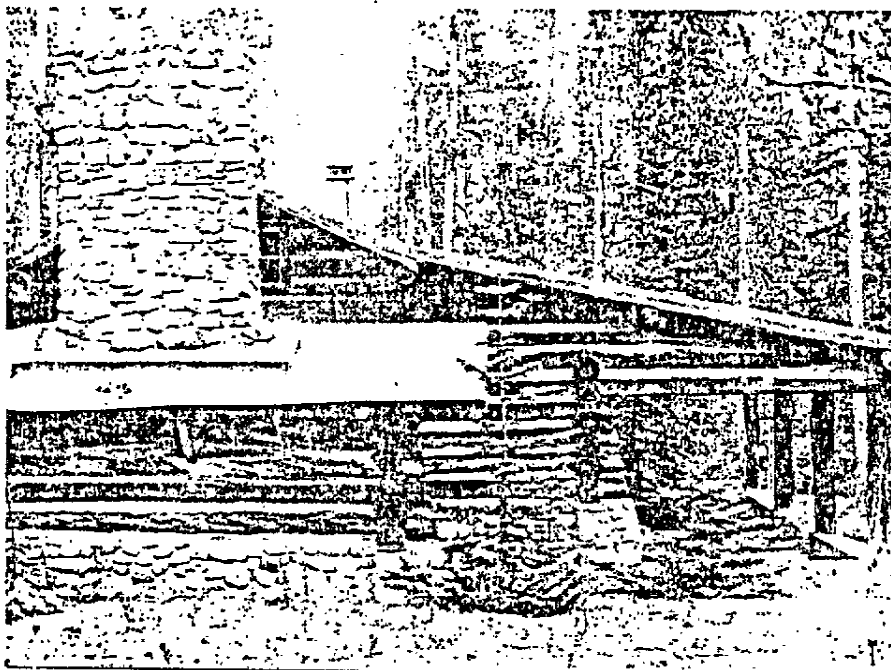
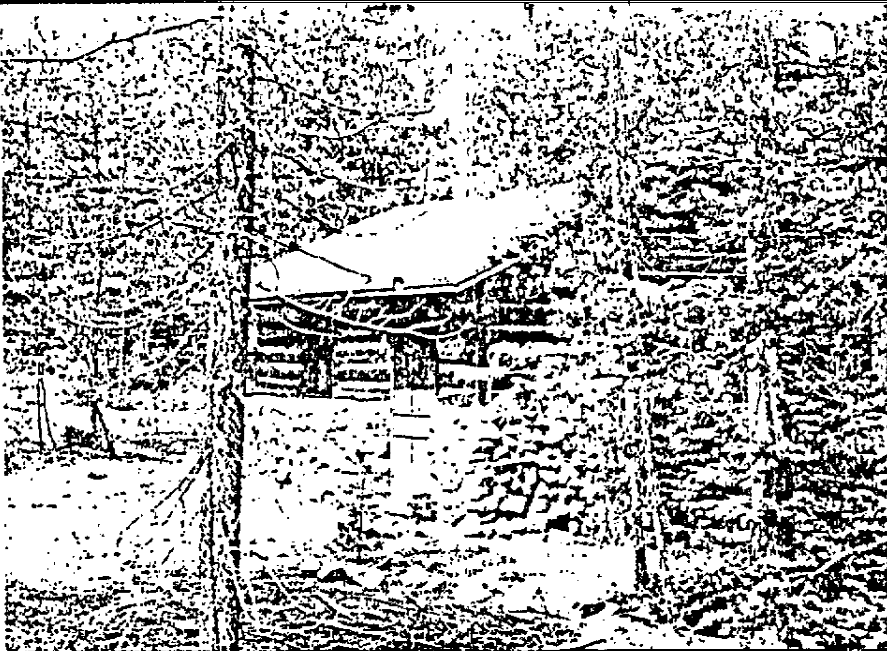


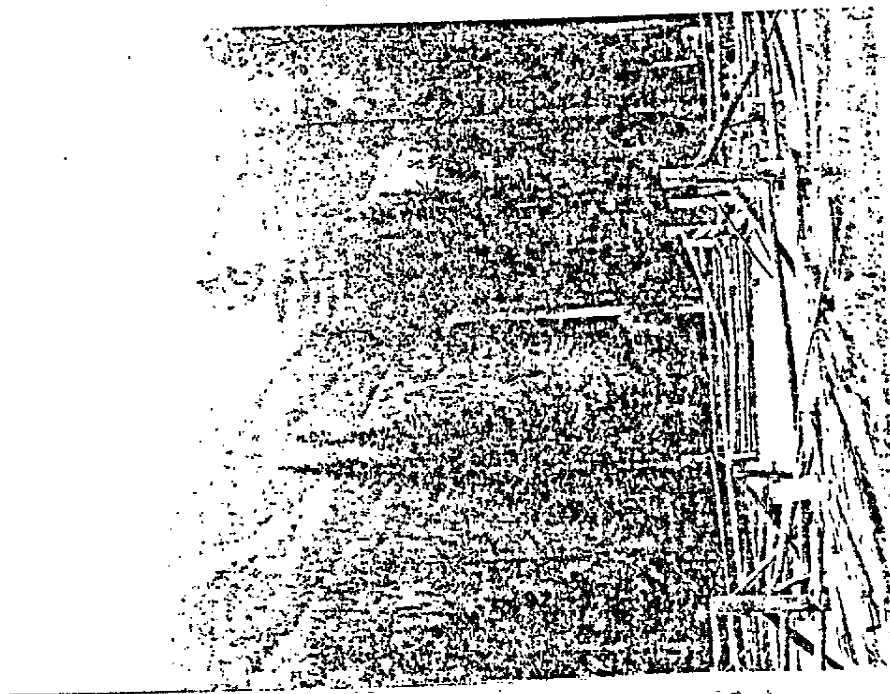
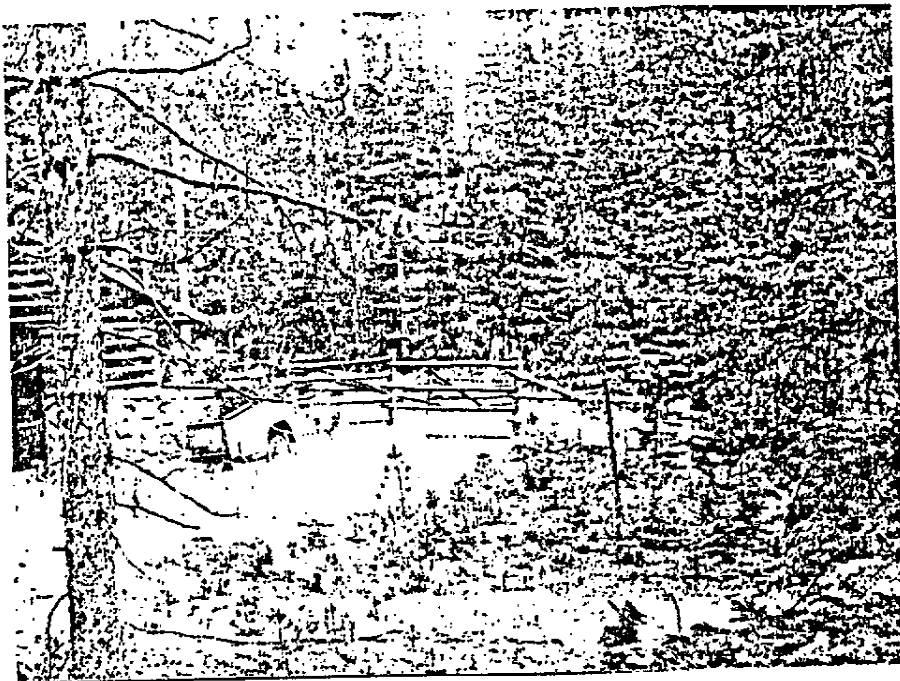












CAMP SENIA HISTORIC DISTRICT

Red Lodge, vicinity
Carbon County, Montana

-----historic district
boundary

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